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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO  
TO WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 001439

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR GTIP MFORSTROM, WHA/CAR JTILGHMAN, WHA/PPC  
SMILLER, INL DKOHN

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PHUM PREL KTIP DR  
SUBJECT: GODR REACTIONS TO TIP TIER 2 WATCH-LIST PLAN

REF: STATE 92774

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¶1. (U) Summary: Per reftel instructions, Poloff delivered demarche and left the Tier 2 watch-list action plan recommendations as a non-paper with key Dominican officials. Our recommendations may be of assistance as the GODR is in the process of developing its own, multi-agency "integrated action plan" to combat trafficking. In seeking to establish a working rapport with these officials, Poloff found that they were quite open about their concerns and complaints. They believe they are working hard to combat trafficking in persons, that previous TIP reports were unbalanced, and that the USG ought to provide additional resources both to conduct more accurate surveys and to address the socio-economic root causes of trafficking. Post expects such candid, but productive, exchanges to continue as preparation of the interim TIP assessment advances in the coming months. End Summary

¶2. (SBU) In the course of delivering reftel points and watch-list action plan at the Dominican Foreign Ministry, Poloff met with Rosario Graciano, Under Secretary for Consular and Immigration Issues, Sonia Vidal, Chief of the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Office, and Kenia Angeles Caceres, Minister Counselor for Migration Affairs. At the Attorney General's office, Poloff met with Dr. Frank Soto, Assistant Prosecutor General, who heads the team that prosecutes trafficking cases, and one of his prosecutors, Hector Perez.

¶3. (SBU) During these meetings GODR officials openly shared their perspectives - something that may prove helpful as Post builds effective working relations. Among the key points made:

-- Officials at the Foreign Ministry noted that relevant agencies have formed a working group that has drafted an "Integrated Action Plan for the Inter-Institutional Commission to Combat the Smuggling and Trafficking of Persons". The officials were thus open to receiving a copy of the non-paper with recommendations contained in reftel.

-- MFA officials acknowledged that they have yet to secure funding for the measures the proposed Integrated Plan may provide, but they are very aware of the need for resources to ensure that the plan can be implemented. They said there is the political will to combat trafficking in the DR - noting the First Lady's interest in the subject - but acknowledged that funding for the plan (or lack thereof) will be a sign of the strength of that political will.

-- While on the subject of funding - and questioning where previous TIP reports obtained their estimates about the numbers of victims of trafficking - the MFA officials informally requested USG assistance to conduct surveys about the extent and nature of the trafficking problem in the Dominican Republic. (Note: Post would welcome discussing the

possibility of G/TIP funding for such an initiative in the DR. End Note)

¶14. (SBU) Dr. Soto is well known to the Embassy as a friendly, helpful contact. Nevertheless, he feels that TIP reports rigidly copy one another - including errors - year after year. He also spoke candidly about the sensitivity of the TIP Report's discussion of Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic. While lamenting the poor conditions in which many undocumented Haitians find themselves, he stated that as they come voluntarily into the DR and can leave when they wish, they are not "forced or slave" labor in most cases.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: The GODR officials Poloff met were courteous, but clearly frustrated. They understand the importance of the TIP issue - and the possible assistance related consequences of remaining on the Tier 2 watch-list over time - but they generally question the basis of some assertions made in previous TIP reports. Moreover, seeing poverty as a major driver of illegal migration, Dominican officials draw a fairly sharp line between economic duress and "real" trafficking (i.e., "the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit a person for profit" - as defined on page 7 of the 2008 TIP report).

¶16. (SBU) Comment continued: Poloff underscored the need for progress and invited GODR officials to provide specific comments, facts and/or figures to strengthen the TIP report. If GODR officials do so, and thereby move beyond complaining that Embassies are over-reliant on newspaper and NGO reports, this would facilitate the preparation of the assessment. Fortunately, the timing of the demarche was good, given that relevant GODR agencies are working on a comprehensive, inter-agency plan of action. (They were to hold a meeting on Sept 10, per Soto.) Whether the DR legislature will fund such a plan adequately, and whether more USG assistance will

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become available, have yet to be seen. End Comment.  
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